Emotional Intelligence and Selection of High Performing Candidates in Law Enforcement

By: Brandon M. Koziol

A Seminar Paper Proposal

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

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In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Masters of Science

in

Education with an Emphasis in Counseling

Approved by (Type advisor name here)

	12/23/20

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(2020)

Abstract

Police departments across the United States are facing a significant shortage of applicants. High-profile police contacts and viral videos of police officers using force have caused protests in cities, with many calling for police reform. Policing is a job of privilege, where law enforcement officers are entrusted with a high level of discretion and, in some cases, life or death decisions. This research explains the role of emotional intelligence in policing and how it can be applied. Positive and negative correlations are explained and discussed. Emotional intelligence is defined while being applied to the pre-employment stages and professional development. Overall, emotional intelligence plays a vital role in policing and police contacts' dynamic nature across the United States daily. Hiring emotionally intelligent officers will be critical moving forward as policing evolves in the 21st century.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Law Enforcement, and Candidate Selection

The year 2020 has been unlike any other time in recent history. The George Floyd death in Minneapolis, MN, and the Jacob Blake shooting in Kenosha, WI are just two police incidents that have incited flashpoints in communities across the United States. These incidents encouraged many people to question why police use force, how force is applied, and how police officers are trained. It is essential to realize that law enforcement is frequently under a microscope in the media, with viral videos depicting the use of force, officer-involved shootings, and allegations of brutality (Elam, 2019). President Obama (2014) stated, Understand, our police officers put their lives on the line for us every day. They've got a tough job to do to maintain public safety and hold accountable those who break the law." This was said amid high-profile police contacts during his presidency and is true today. Selecting a communities' protectors is a task that should not be taken lightly, as consequences for actions may have an international ripple effect. More than ever, discussions are being held on how law enforcement should be reformed or changed to meet today's society's needs. An officer's daily job responsibility is one of privilege. It requires a high degree of emotional skills to adapt to the ever-changing environments and communal contacts conducted on a day to day basis (Escamilla, 2017). A police officer often is required to take on many roles within a community, such as a mentor, enforcer, and perform social work functions. All of these tasks are conflicting in and of themselves (California POST, 2019). This highly emotional job requires selecting individuals who can be trusted to perform in a challenging and ever-changing field of work.

Law enforcement is categorized by Everett (2019) as a "High Emotional Labor Component Job," meaning police officers often have frequent interactions with the public and

co-workers. Selecting candidates with high emotional intelligence often leads to higher

performing individuals in law enforcement (Ono et al., 2011). Many factors are contributing to

emotional intelligence as it is measured in the profession of law enforcement. The California

POST (2019) Psychological Screening Manual identifies ten "dimensions" desirable or indicators

of good and bad performance characteristics. Given the complexity of job responsibilities, a

police officer must also manage relationships within a community. By utilizing screening tools

during the selection process will facilitate the hire of strong candidates who will build strong

relationships in the community, effectively patrol of neighborhoods, and maintain public order

(Elam, 2019). To effectively select police candidates for communities, high requirements must

be satisfied. The selection procedures for hiring law enforcement officers currently utilize a

"Screen out" method versus a "Screen in" process (Everett, 2019). Using a screen out procedure

takes candidates out of the applicant pool who may have been able to perform the job

responsibilities of a police officer successfully.

Statement of the Problem

Law enforcement agencies are facing a recruiting shortage nationwide. According to the

Police Executive Research Forum (2019), 66% of agencies who responded to a survey reported a

significant decrease in applications. Some agencies reported a 36% decrease in applications and

that the most common reason an officer is leaving the profession is to pursue another career.

There is a need to identify officers who perform well on the job, are respected in the community

and are trusted by their peers. At this time, emotional intelligence assessments are rarely used in

assessing or evaluating candidates in law enforcement. Through reviewing emotional intelligence and its application to law enforcement, officer performance will be discussed. Both positive and nonpositive outcomes will be addressed and what is sought in a desirable candidate will be clarified. By researching agencies' hiring practices and professional development, alternative methods will be discussed with regards to how to improve the quality of candidates hired by law enforcement agencies across the country. Overall, this research helped to answer the following question: What is the correlation between emotional intelligence, police officer performance, and how candidates are hired by law enforcement agencies?

Significance of the Study

Having officers who are aware of emotions within themselves and others is key to many positive contacts with member of the community (Escamilla, 2017). Recruiting and retaining high performing officers should have positive outcomes in agency recruitment and in the overall confidence a community has in its police force. Researching the application of emotional intelligence in law enforcement will explore its effects on job functions. Emotional intelligence will then be assessed in the hiring procedures and professional development utilized. A discussion of the significance and benefit of the study and use of emotional intelligence in law enforcement by addressing these key points is included in this paper.

Purpose of the Study

This research discusses the level of impact emotional intelligence has on policing. Emotional intelligence is explained, as well as how assessments measuring emotional

intelligence are administered. Ideal traits of an officer will be discussed and how specific profiles have positive and negative outcomes in the field. Finally, research into agencies hiring practices will be explored. The utilization of successful emotional intelligence training in the workplace will be discussed.

Definition of Terms

California POST: California Commission on Peace Officer Standard and Training (California POST, 2019).

EI: Emotional Intelligence (EI) or emotional quotient (EQ) is a set of skills that help us better perceive, understand, and manage emotions in ourselves and others. Collectively they help us make intelligent responses to and use emotions (Genos, 2020).

PERF: Police Executive Research Forum (PERF, 2019).

Trait: Any fairly consistent behavior or set of actions an individual tends to exhibit, such as enjoying being with people, being conscientious, or trying new things (Salvoy, 2007).

Delimitations of Research

This research proposal took place during the spring 2020 semester at UW – Platteville. This project's limiting scope is to address the problem question in a three-pronged approach: reviewing literature in emotional intelligence, applying emotional intelligence to performance tasks, and current hiring practices / professional development used in law enforcement. Scholarly searches of EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, and print sources were conducted. Peer-reviewed

articles published within the past five to seven years were sought to apply emotional intelligence to law enforcement tasks. Other sources involving emotional intelligence research were broadened beyond five years, given the specific origin of research into emotional intelligence is much older.

Method of Approach

Research into emotional intelligence was first completed to provide insight into how the concepts can be applied to law enforcement. Understanding what emotional intelligence is, analysis using EBSCOhost and other scholarly sources were completed searching for specific peer-reviewed articles that applied the concept of emotional intelligence to law enforcement tasks. I reviewed articles that discussed and evaluated officer performance in interviews, interrogations, the hiring process, psychological screenings, use of force, and other job-related areas. Understanding what motivations led to these studies' conclusions provided a guideline for the research into this proposal's framework. I summarized the findings in chapter 2 of this proposal. Findings and recommendations are discussed in chapter 3.

Chapter Summary

Law enforcement is a high-stakes career, where one employee's actions may lead to a ripple effect, causing community distrust. By recognizing the recruiting shortages faced by law enforcement agencies, the utilization of effective procedures is critical in the assessment, testing, and selection of candidates. By utilizing emotional intelligence, agencies can screen in candidates who align with department values, culture, and community needs. Having an

emotionally intelligent officer can lead to stronger relationships and better-policing services offered to communities during a pivotal point in American policing.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The actions of police officers are highlighted in the media on a continuous circuit depicting graphic incidents. These incidents cause many people to question authority and police conduct altogether. In a study completed by Voigt et al. (2017), 981 body camera videos from Oakland, CA study concluded racial disparities in officer respect which can cause a lack of trust in police officers. This research paper is an overview of emotional intelligence and how specific personality dimensions lead to positive and negative outcomes in policing contacts. Further, the hiring practices of law-enforcement are briefly discussed, and how little professional development data is available in the training of law enforcement officers in emotional intelligence skills. Successes in the business world are explored, and how applying emotional intelligence as a means of professional development may positively influence law-enforcement interactions.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotions are a fundamental part of being human and drive or control many of our day-to-day interactions. Emotional intelligence is defined by Genos International (2020) as a set of skills that helps a person to better perceive or understand and manage emotions in themselves and others. In many cases, these particular skills are essential and considered just as necessary as a person's intellectual intelligence level (Salovey et al., 2007). According to Palmer et al., (2007), emotional intelligence is categorized into three main approaches. The first approach is

ability based on the concept of mental abilities and emotions that are entwined with the

processing of emotional information. This particular approach indexes differences in a person's

emotional ability. The second type is self-reported trait measures that evaluate a person's

behavioral preferences and styles related to emotion. The last approach is competency measures

of emotional intelligence. This approach focuses on the differences regarding how a person

displays emotionally intelligent behavior. Essentially, emotional intelligence, in layman's terms,

is similar to having and assessing "people skills" (Genos, 2020).

To assess emotional intelligence, the assessment comprises three psychometric properties

(Palmer, 2007). These properties are internal consistency reliability, which determines an

assessment's reliability over time. Factorial validity demonstrates the measure is designed to

exist in population data. Lastly, criterion-related validity is a body of research studies in which

scores on the assessment are meaningfully related to other measures. Some of these measures

predict variance in related variables, distinguish between groups, and are distant from other

measures of construct. Palmer (2007) states this sets emotional intelligence assessment tools

apart from other widely used personality assessments. Emotional intelligence assessment tools

need to be scientifically studied and published in peer-reviewed journals. Palmer (2007) cautions

the user when attempting to use online assessment tools to measure emotional intelligence.

Genos (2020) has several emotional intelligence assessment questionnaires available to students

and institutions wishing to conduct research. These specific assessments have different levels of

measurement and vary in scope.

The intent of a study or assessment into emotional intelligence will dictate which measurement of emotional intelligence is utilized. Palmer (2007) states that a thorough job analysis of the work role and various functions must be performed before selecting a measure. When used in the workplace, a combination of the psychometric traits involving emotional abilities, preference/style, and behavior may all be combined. Genos International Emotional Intelligence Inventory is a worldwide leader in providing assessment tools specifically oriented towards workplace performance. Palmer (2007) outlines the advancement of measurements regarding emotional intelligence. The Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory is a 70 item multi-rater assessment tool (Palmer et al., In Press). This specific tool was developed by occupational psychologists who specifically work in selecting and developing employees. This particular assessment is used widely in assessing workplace performance and is often used in assessing law enforcement candidates. One such manual discussed in the next section is the California POST (2019) "Psychological Screening Manual." This manual reviews a study conducted to determine how personality can predict an officer's overall performance. This study's personality scale is closely linked with emotional intelligence and can be applied directly to best practices regarding the law enforcement application process.

Emotional Intelligence in Law Enforcement

On December 18th, 2014 President Obama formed a task force to assess policing in the 21st century. In the final report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015), many changes are discussed and needed in policing. Pillar five and six identified the need for

further training and education and the overall wellness of officers. The study confirmed the need

for officers to be trained for policing today's society. For this research, the California POST

(2019) "Psychological Screening Manual" provided a base groundwork for an ideal candidate.

California was the first state to develop a manual for police leadership, community panels, and

oversight committees. The manual provided guidelines for how to hire police applicants based on

best practices. A study was completed by California POST and created specific dimensions to

predict future law enforcement officers' performance. To assess these dimensions, the personality

profiles of successful officers who were psychologically healthy were completed. These subjects

scored high in 14 positive attributes. Some of these were agreeableness, integrity, tolerance, and

other similar traits required to perform well in policing. Next, California POST (2019) compiled

a list of negative psychological indicators and indicators of dysfunctional behaviors gathered

from numerous unhealthy officers' studies. Some counterproductive work behaviors identified

were the destruction of property, misuse of information, alcohol use, drug use, and inappropriate

physical actions. Many of these ineffective behaviors are often exhibited in poor-performing

officers multiple times over.

After analyzing positive performance, performance problems, job functions, job

demands, and specific traits of successful officers, California POST (2019) developed ten

dimensions. These dimensions are social competence, teamwork, adaptability/flexibility,

consciousness/dependability, impulse control/attention to safety, integrity/ethics, emotional

regulation/stress tolerance, decision making/judgment, assertiveness/persuasiveness, avoiding

substance abuse, and other risk-taking behaviors. To create and validate these dimensions,

California POST (2019) conducted five phases of testing. The first phase consisted of reviewing past job analysis. Job information was solicited from agencies and organizations outside of California to develop criteria for the psychological challenges and realities associated with policing. Phase 2 consisted of developing a job analysis questionnaire and administering it to professionals in the field. By administering this, California POST (2019) was able to establish detailed trait information. This trait information was then created into a personality-based requirements questionnaire consisting of 123 behaviors and organized into 11 trait categories closely related to emotional intelligence. Of these behaviors and traits, the ten dimensions were created. Phase 3 consisted of focus groups to validate the initial set of attributes. Next, phase four involved the creation of "critical incidents." These critical incidents were case studies into 265 incidents involving the ten dimensions above. The primary purpose of developing the measurements was to provide a basis for examination and evaluation protocols. The second reason was to provide a behavioral definition in specific examples of acceptable/unacceptable behavior according to each dimension. Further, the dimensions provide an organizing structure for information collected from tests, interview responses, and personal history information to support or disqualify an applicant's psychological suitability.

It should be noted that this manual utilizes the guidelines of the "Big 5 Factor Model of Personality" and is not explicitly identified as emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is typically a higher indicator of job performance; however, it is closely correlated with personality assessments (Palmer, 2007). The next section will discuss some positive and negative studies

that outline emotional intelligence and law enforcement personnel regarding performance-related tasks.

Positive Correlations Between Emotional Intelligence and Law Enforcement

By studying peer-reviewed articles focused on law enforcement's emotional intelligence and job functions, correlations with dimensions outlined by the California POST (2019) exist. The administrators of Civil Service Success (n.d) stated that emotional intelligence was critical to police officers successfully regulating emotions for situations not to be blown out of proportion with irreversible consequences. Ono et al. (2011) studied 131 federal law enforcement agents. All of the participants were in a federal academy preparing to become Special Investigators for the Air Force. During the first week of training, participants were administered a personality inventory to assess emotional intelligence dimensions. Once data was collected, emotional intelligence was determined to have a positive correlation with an investigative mindset. Ono et al. (2011) further determined investigators with children perform better as interrogators.

Millet (2008) studied the correlation between emotional intelligence and police officer job satisfaction. The findings of this study showed correlations between certain dimensions and job satisfaction. One such dimension identified was optimism. An officer who has a higher rating of optimism is likely to have a better outlook and job satisfaction. Further, this study determined in the personnel tested, if autonomy and job control are high (meaning there is less micromanagement), overall job satisfaction is higher among police officers.

Regarding Aguilar (2017), law enforcement personnel, master's level psychology students, and public members were shown an interrogation video. Following the video, they completed a survey in regards to how each person viewed the interrogation. The law enforcement group scored the highest in trait-based emotional intelligence. This study found that the law enforcement group perceived deception at a higher rate than the other groups upon viewing the recorded interrogation.

Negative Correlations Between Emotional Intelligence and Law Enforcement

Many difficult consequences may arise in the event an officer is hired who is not emotionally intelligent. McCutcheon (2018) studied emotional intelligence applied to stress. Law enforcement officers are exposed to high levels of trauma and stress throughout a career. This particular study found that emotionally intelligent officers reported lower levels of stress than less emotionally intelligent officers. This finding is very important when mitigating liability for a department and improving interactions with the public. In Elam's (2019) research, over 100 citizens and police officers were surveyed regarding the connection between the use of force and emotional intelligence. This information was gathered in the United States and Canada. Overall, this study found that approximately 44% of police officers believed that excessive force could be attributed to an officer "losing it," meaning control over oneself.

Further, the study found the general public believes emotional intelligence is related to the use of excessive force. In contrast, officers did not believe emotional intelligence was directly correlated with excessive force. Overall, there is a need for additional research in the use

of force and emotional intelligence highlighted by the author. Elam (2019) stated that with the

rising costs of lawsuits, there's a significant need for additional research into pre-screening and

hiring applicants to vet candidates. Faltas (2018) stated in the 2017 NYPD complaint review

board received 295,616 allegations of misconduct. Faltas stated the department's low discipline

rate might have created a culture where misconduct is viewed as ok and affected officers'

emotional intelligence. Overall, emotional intelligence numerous needs have been highlighted,

requiring more research into the negative correlations and how to address them.

Professional Development and Hiring Practices Explored

Everett (2019) explored the selection of police personnel concerning emotional

intelligence. Since the 1970s, law enforcement has utilized a screen out protocol where subjects

are excluded based on identifiable psychopathology. Further, Everett (2019) claims this fails to

identify positive attributes that may enable particular applicants to succeed as police officers.

Emotional intelligence was identified as a platform to begin successfully screening applicants by

using a particular protocol. Everett (2019) completed a study of over 100 officers to determine

whether emotional intelligence was a factor in job-related performance. The study's findings

showed emotional intelligence played a factor, and very few police officers scored in the high

emotional intelligence category. Other studies from India and Nigeria proved this was also true

according to Adetula, (2016). To compare and contrast Everett (2019), a further review of the

California POST (2019) manual was completed. California POST (2019) still highly

recommends using the screen out method and only screening in applicants who have met a

minimum standard. This screening is believed because not every citizen can become a law enforcement officer. California POST recommends that subjects who have been convicted of domestic violence, a felony, or do not meet the minimum education requirements, etc., still be disqualified from applying to be a law enforcement officer. Emotional intelligence comes into consideration during the psychological screening of an applicant. Using the dimensions listed above, California POST outlines the positive and negative attributes listed in each dimension to help an agency determine the best fit for hire. There is a significant need to study the screen in versus screen out models to determine a viable compromise in the two systems to allow emotionally intelligent applicants to apply for law enforcement positions.

A search of emotional intelligence being used in law enforcement officers' professional development yielded little to no results across multiple platforms. The majority of studies being conducted into emotional intelligence and professional development have been applied to other work environments, and the results are alarming. Palmer (2007) describes emotional intelligence being applied to businesses. Research has confirmed claims regarding the effectiveness of training or professional development in emotional intelligence. Some cases studied listed leadership effectiveness, employee retention, occupational stress, job satisfaction, sales performance, and effective teamwork skills. Palmer (2007) describes the company L'Oreal as reportedly having achieved net revenue increases of over $2.5 million following sales professionals' selection based on emotional intelligence. Further, Palmer (2007) discusses a study where experienced partners in a multinational consulting firm who had high emotional

intelligence delivered $1.2 million more profit from their accounts than peers who had lower emotional intelligence.

McLaughlin (2013) studied over 600 entrepreneurs across the United States regarding the context of emotional intelligence applied to entrepreneurial success. In the study, McLaughlin (2013) noted that emotional intelligence had a significant impact on an entrepreneur's success. Areas where this was present impacted financial success, performance relative to competitors, and personal success. These margins were measured by evaluating the participant's company relative to other competitors in the industry. Additionally, in Campo et al. (2016), a rugby team was accessed and split into two groups. One group was given emotional intelligence training, and the other did not receive any. The group who received the training successfully increased emotional intelligence at the trait level and affected people who may have had no motivation to do so. When assessing this study, an important parallel between spots teams and police departments are they require effective communication skills, leadership, and support from one another. Overall, emotional intelligence is believed to have a strong link between workplace performance and professional development. Understanding the relationship between performance and development is critical when assessing the application of emotional intelligence to law enforcement. Providing training to departments will deliver communities with an employee who is more productive and less likely to make critical errors.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence has been defined as having people skills, whether good or bad. Through a review of relevant literature, it is obvious that emotional intelligence in law-enforcement is important. California POST (2019) outlined dimensions that lay a foundation for selecting candidates. By reviewing relevant studies into law enforcement's performance, it is apparent that emotional intelligence has positive and negative correlations with the job functions in policing. In reviewing current hiring practices, it appears they are outdated, and consideration should be applied to screening applicants with desired emotional intelligence traits. Professional development has been studied in the business field with alarming successes. Research into professional development with applied emotional intelligence should be considered for law-enforcement officers. Some companies report millions of dollars in financial gain by selecting candidates with high emotional intelligence. Imagine what cultural changes may happen as a result of emotional intelligence professional development applied to law-enforcement. Overall, additional research needs to be considered in professional development, current hiring practices, and the pre-screening of applicants based on emotional intelligence. Studies have shown positive correlations with selecting officers who are high in emotional intelligence. Emotionally intelligent officers perform better in certain aspects that may lead to better police services delivered to communities worldwide.

Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations

The year 2020 has been a volatile time in American history. Many communities and activist groups have marched in the streets, demanding reform in law enforcement. In reviewing this research's findings, it is clear emotional intelligence plays a role in successful law enforcement contacts. Many studies have seen significant differences in police officers who possess high emotional intelligence scores, traits, and characteristics. Unfortunately, this research has also shown significant gaps and research into emotional intelligence applied to policing. Police officers often face difficult, traumatic, and stressful situations on the streets and within the organization. Not providing officers with emotional intelligence training or even accessing them before hire often leaves an organization, not knowing how the officer will react in certain situations.

In many cases, this can lead to excessive force, lawsuits, and devastating consequences. There is a significant need to make officers more emotionally intelligent. The private business sector has seen significant success in the application of emotional intelligence. Suppose law enforcement could provide, screen, and train officers in the use of emotional intelligence. In that case, many high-profile incidents could be avoided all together and lead to stronger communal ties with society's protectors.

While reviewing the numerous studies of emotional intelligence and law enforcement, I would recommend policing agencies begin to screen officers for emotional intelligence scores and consult with a psychologist trained in assessments before hiring the candidate. The California POST (2019) has an excellent manual in the assessment of police candidates. This

manual does a great job outlining good traits, bad traits, and what agencies can expect to see in performance when hiring people high or low in those traits. It is also crucial for police agencies to establish a culture of emotionally intelligent policing. Conflicts can be avoided and or mitigated by officers who have high emotional intelligence scores. Law enforcement agencies need to maintain an officer's emotional intelligence through professional development to make sure officers are healthy and mentally fit for the job for the duration of a career. By not taking care of society's protectors and recognizing the difficult services they provide to communities, we fail to keep a healthy police force. Having a police force that is constantly under the microscope will cause officers to leave the profession and not respond to emergencies in communities across the country.

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